



Yeti



The official magazine of YHA Bushwalking Victoria Club. July to September 2023

Issue 53

Introduction

Welcome to YHA Bushwalking's Yeti magazine, which has been in hiatus since before the pandemic. But now it's back! Our first edition in quite some time is a bumper edition of 20 pages. Naturally, we would love to receive contributions from our members and hikers, so if you have something for the next edition, please reach out at yetieditor@yhabush.org.au

Club Nights

Our club nights deserve a special mention; they are a great way to get involved in the club and make connections. Club nights may include a social event, or a training course on how to lead hikes, or guest speakers covering hikes around the world or any number of topics that our club night organiser can think of! Please book via the website, which also includes the location (as they move around a bit).

YHA Bushwalking Club's Committee

Clubs need organisers and leaders to work! Like most clubs, we have a committee and you will meet some of our committee members on hikes and social events.

President	Adnan Lovic	(president@yhabush.org.au)
Walks Secretary	Doug Miers	(walkssecretary@yhabush.org.au)
Treasurer	Richard Lawrence	(treasurer@yhabush.org.au)
Secretary	Tanveer Ahmed	(secretary@yhabush.org.au)
Communications	Sonya Radwyl	(contact@yhabush.org.au)
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Social Events	Angelica Payne	(committee@yhabush.org.au)
Everything Else	Ken Sussex	(committee@yhabush.org.au)

Non Committee:

Yeti Editor	Craig Beer	(yetieditor@yhabush.org.au)
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Upcoming Events

Our walks program has a wide variety of events that are sure to appeal to everyone. It continues to evolve. In addition to our usual selection of Saturday and Sunday walks, we have urban walks over summer and at various other times throughout the year. We have a number of accommodated weekends coming up in the Grampians and the Blue Mountains. We also have major trips to Adelaide for Easter of next year, the high country in January and a few more that are still being developed. At this stage, we have no pack carries for the next couple of months, but watch this space; there are pack carries on the way.

The following list will be added to over the course of the next few weeks, so keep an eye on the club website. As always, please book through the website at <https://yhabush.org.au/activities/current-walks-program/>, and keep an eye on your emails in case of last minute cancellations or changes of plan.

Jul 1	1	<u>Mt Everard Circuit Kinglake</u>	Saturday	Med-hard	Richard T
Jul 2	1	<u>Lal Lal Bungle Circuit</u>	Sunday	Med-hard	Adnan L
Jul 4	1	<u>Leading the way: Navigation using phone apps</u>	Clubnight		Jann C
Jul 6	1	<u>Winter in the City: Thursday Evening Urban Walk</u>	Evening	Easy	Craig B
Jul 8	1	<u>Snow and waterfalls walk (Marysville/Lake Mountain)</u>	Saturday	Medium	Vebica E
Jul 9	1	<u>Wandong Regional Park Loop</u>	Sunday	Medium	Richard L
Jul 15	1	<u>Lohs Lane to McKenzies Flat (Lerderderg Track)</u>	Saturday	Easy-med	Claudio P
Jul 21	3	<u>Grampians Accommodated Trip</u>	Accommodated	Med-hard	Craig B
Jul 29	1	<u>Mount Beenak Loop (Powelltown)</u>	Saturday	Med-hard	Bill X
Aug 1	1	<u>Social event- Pub trivia quiz and dinner</u>	Clubnight		Jann C
Aug 5	1	<u>Mt Ida circuit (Heathcote region)</u>	Saturday	Medium	Stephen S
Aug 12	1	<u>Sherbrooke Forest 13km Circuit</u>	Saturday	Medium	Greta C
Aug 18	2	<u>Dunkeld (Southern Grampians) Accommodated Weekend</u>	Accommodated	Medium	Stephen S

Aug 26	1	<u>First Aid Course 2023</u>	First aid		Tanveer A
Sep 30	1	<u>Cathedral Ranges Northern Circuit</u>	Saturday	Med-hard	Bill X
Oct 15	1	<u>Coast Walk Jan Juc to Anglesea</u>	Sunday	Med-hard	David M
Nov 3	4	<u>Blue Mountains Accommodated Trip: Melbourne Cup Weekend</u>	Accommodated	Med-hard	David S
Mar 28, 2024	1 0	<u>Adelaide Accommodated Trip: Easter Week</u>	Accommodated	Medium	Craig B

New Leaders

We have around 65 to 70 leaders at the moment, but leaders come and go, so we're always looking for more. The joy of being a leader is you can pick hikes that interest you. Other leaders and committee members are more than happy to show you the ropes, and formal training is also provided.

Leaders enjoy a raft of other benefits too. Leaders can attend free, fully accredited first aid training, and get to attend the annual leaders lunch! Its also a great way to meet new people and develop your organising and leadership skills.

If you are keen, please reach out to our Walks Secretary, Doug Miers at walkssecretary@yhabush.org.au.

Contribute to Yeti

Have you got something interesting for your fellow bushwalkers? A story of something that went wrong on a hike? A trip report? A useful map or special article? Please reach out; we'd love to hear from you. Yeti contributions can be sent to yetieditor@yhabush.org.au.

Jonas Lea Award

The recipient of this years Jonas Lea award is Richard Lawrence.

Richard is not only a long time member of YHA Bushwalking, but also leads hikes for the club and serves on the committee as the Club's treasurer.

Jonas Lea was a long time member and leader of this club who sadly passed away in 2018 at the age of 41. He was an extremely well known and popular leader but had some battles with his health. Regardless, he pushed on with bushwalking among his many interests. His family funds the Jonas Lea Award to acknowledge the efforts of an outstanding contributor to the club.

Trip Reports

Gold Coast and Northern Rivers – Easter 2023

12 people recently ventured to the Gold Coast and Northern New South Wales for a major interstate trip. An urban hike along the Gold Coast, Lamington National Park, the New South Wales northern coast and Gondwanaland were on the list of places to visit.

We divided our time between Coolangatta and Grafton, a pretty town in NSW on the banks of the Clarence River. We met a carpet python and saw a massive pod of dolphins surfing the waves barely 50 metres from the beach.

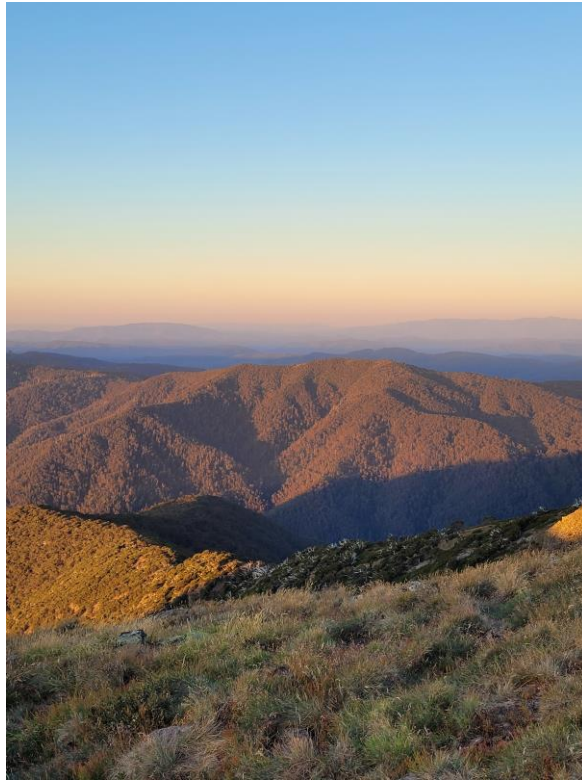


Victorian High Country – Australia Day Week, 2023

18 people attended our 2023 High Country trip which was spread over Mount Hotham and Mount Buller, staying in ski clubs. Those at Mount Hotham have developed a distaste for moths; the place was absolutely infested with them!



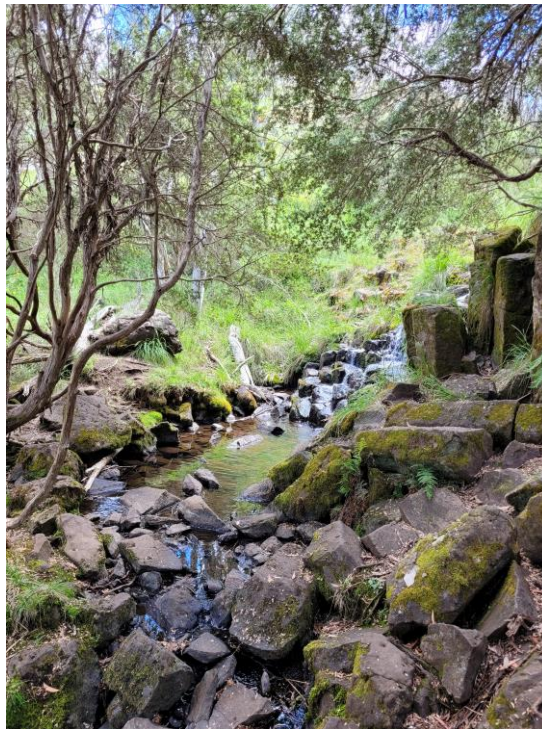
They just climbed the Western Ridge of Mt Buller!



The sun sets over Mount Buller



Mountain hut near Dinner Plain



A peaceful stream near Dinner Plain provided a welcoming cool drink of pure mountain water.

Meet the animals of the bush!

The echidna

One of Australia's cutest but not so cuddly creature is the echidna. Having descended from the platypus many millions of years ago, they are capable swimmers, and can be found throughout Australia, Tasmania, some of our smaller islands and New Guinea.

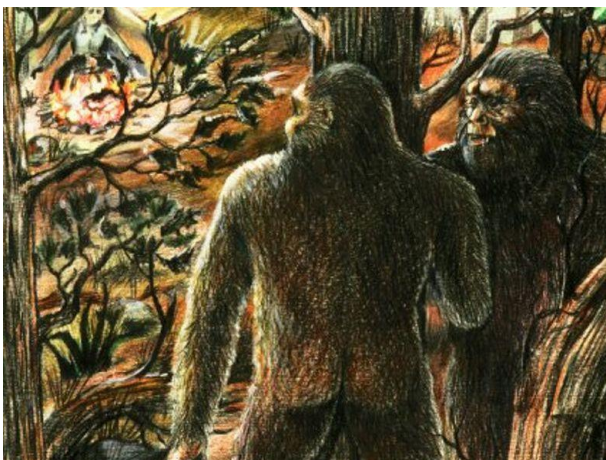
There are a couple of different varieties of echidna, although Australia only has the short-beaked echidna. They live in burrows, occasionally sharing with a wombat or rabbit, and their diet consists of ants and termites. They will fall victim to introduced species such as dogs, cats or foxes, but goannas will predate on echidnas if the need arises. The echidna's spiny back provides a lot of protection. Their biggest threat these days is habitat loss.

You may not see an echidna, but you may occasionally see their poo; it's cylindrical in shape, broken and made up largely of dirt and ant-hill material.

A baby echidna is called a puggle. Echidnas do not give birth to live young but rather lay eggs; they are one of only two egg laying mammals (known as monotremes) in the world, the other being their cousin the platypus. After breaking out of the egg, the puggle lives in his or her mother's pouch for about a month and a half, and then lives with their mother for up to a year. They can live for about ten years in the wild.



The yowie



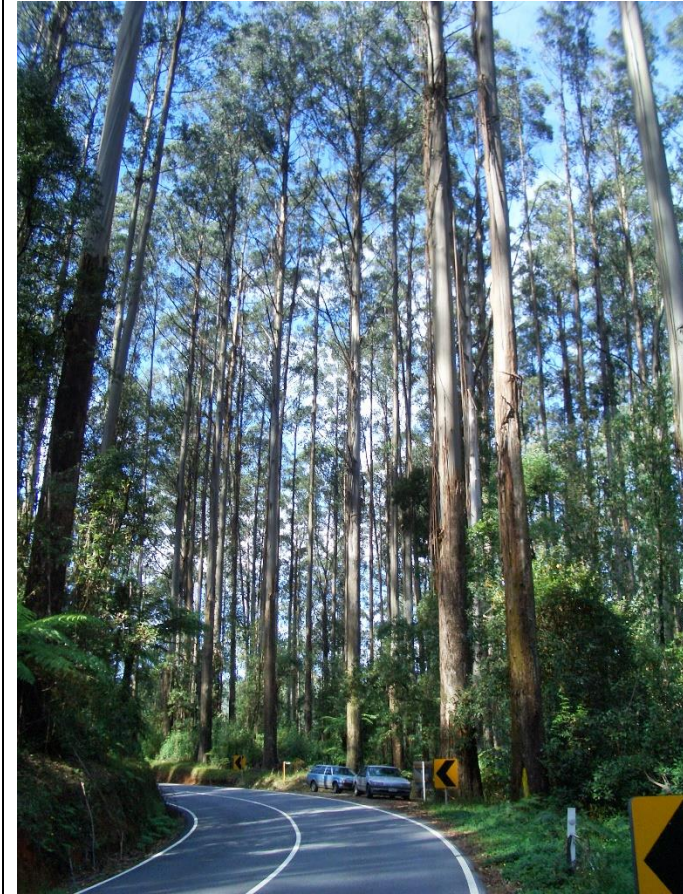
An extremely hairy, ape-like creature that is between 2.1 and 3.6 metres tall, the yowie is occasionally seen by some people after a night of heavy drinking when stuck out in the bush. Sightings are predominant in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. It is similar to the abominable snowman, the sasquatch, the yeti and the bigfoot.

However, the creature is actually thought to descend from Aboriginal folklore.

If you ever see a yowie, please keep your distance. Despite its massive size, the creature is shy and timid, but will become violent or aggressive if cornered or provoked. And please take a photograph, as no one will believe you otherwise.

Plant life of the bush

Mountain Ash



Did you know there are only 22 tree species worldwide known to reach over 80 metres tall? And that these trees are found in only three parts of the world, the west coast of North America, Borneo and Australia? All the Australian species are from the eucalypt family. The tree grows in particularly wet environment. You can see them in the Otways, Dandenongs, Yarra and Strzelecki Ranges.

Australia's mountain ash is native to Victoria and Tasmania, and is the second tallest growing tree species in the world. The tallest specimen ever measured stands at 102 metres in Tasmania's Arve Valley, south of Hobart.

The species grows extraordinarily quickly but it still takes 200 years to reach its biggest; a rate five times faster than the redwoods.

Blue fungi



The elusive blue fungi is found in eucalypt forests and rainforests throughout southern Australia over the winter months. A startlingly blue colour, this little plant grows up to 7 centimetres high. Although it has no taste or colour, I wouldn't recommend eating it.

The fungi makes for an excellent photography subject.

Fungi hunters will be pleased to know a number of apps exist to assist with identifying each specimen you find and then telling you lots of boring stuff about it.

Iconic mountains and parks

Mt Bogong

At 1986 metres, Mount Bogong is Victoria's highest mountain. Perched high in the Alpine National Park towards Falls Creek, the mountain is relatively easy to climb, with three dedicated routes to the summit, being the Granite Flat Walking Track, the Staircase Spur and the Eskdale Spur. The mountain is accessible in the summer months when it is relatively cool, with a number of overnight routes also available on the mountain. In winter, the mountain is usually covered in snow, attracting cross country skiers in their hundreds.



Source: Snowys.com.au

Yarra Ranges National Park

The Yarra Ranges National Park is the largest of the national parks close to Melbourne. At 76,000 hectares, a number of animals live within its boundaries including kangaroos, wallabies, wombats and platypuses and a reputed 120 species of birds.

The park incorporates a number of sensational day hikes, including Mount Donna Buang, Mount Leonard, Monda Track, and a few others. You could easily make a long weekend out here!

Mount St Leonard Circuit: This challenging day hike is one of the best in the Yarra Ranges National Park. The reward of 1300m of total climbing is the view that stretches all the way to Melbourne on a clear day from the top of Mount St Leonard.

Tanglefoot Track and Myrtle Gully Loop: This is a beautiful loop off Monda Road near Mt St Leonard through dense forest. It combines both the Tanglefoot Loop and Myrtle Gully Circuit into a lengthy day hike.

Mount Juliet Walking Track: Mount Juliet is not for the unfit and inexperienced – it is probably the toughest day hike out of Melbourne! It has over 900m over total climbing in a short few

kilometres. And then after that, there are no magnificent views thanks to the trees. You do it to test yourself.

Mount Dom Dom Loop: This loop walk follows a rough **4x4 track** around Mt Dom Dom from the Dom Dom Saddle Picnic Area. It's not the best walk in the area but for the short distance, you can enjoy the mountain ash trees and have the chance to see some wildlife.

Monda Track: This is a great day hike in the Black Range State Forest. It's mostly along wide dirt track through tall mountain ash forest.

Morleys Track: Morleys Track is a one-way trail that takes you from Dom Dom Saddle to Fernshaw Picnic Area on the Black Spur. It can be a little overgrown, with little track maintenance done in this area, but there are visible tree markers showing the way through the mountain ash forest.

Mount Donna Buang via Mount Victoria: One of the most popular hikes in the area, this one is a bit of a bastard, with total climbing of 1,100 metres. Snow does occur in winter, so check the weather before heading out, and possibly avoid doing after heavy rain.

O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail: This long but very pretty trail (it actually goes for 34 kilometres) follows the O'Shannassy Aqueduct from Don Valley to East Warburton through the Yarra Ranges National Park, which is long enough to eventually quieten down the most talkative hiker. It's usually broken into shorter sections.

McMahons Creek Goldfields: Located just past Warburton, this pretty 10 kilometre hike takes you through forest surrounding the Yarra River and past evidence of the **former goldfield** in the area. The loop is marked but there is little maintenance done on the track and sections can be closed for some time.

Mount Riddell: This wide track meanders all the way from the bottom to the top of Mt Riddell in Healesville. Over the course of 6km, you gain 600m of elevation with a relentless climb that is perfect for some hill training.

Source: <https://beyondwildplaces.com/best-walks-in-the-yarra-ranges-national-park/>

My favourite hike

Craig Beer tells us of one of his favourite hikes in Victoria; the Great Dividing Trail.

The Great Dividing Trail has long fascinated me. Traversing central Victoria, the trail starts in Ballarat and ends in Bendigo, with a very large offshoot heading towards Bacchus Marsh. Combined, the track extends for 300 kilometres.

There is something for everyone on this track; you can do it as a series of day hikes, or tackle a number of overnight sections, albeit with some pre-planning involved; you may need to organise some water drops at almost any time of the year, as it is dry hungry country in parts.

The first section from Ballarat to Daylesford takes you through Victoria's third largest city, rolling farmland and the pretty town of Creswick, a great place to stop for a meal and a beer.

The second section from Daylesford to Castlemaine goes through some pleasant bush gorges, scrubby forest and relics of the world's greatest gold rush, with stone ruins, old water races and mining shafts readily available.

The third section from Castlemaine to Bendigo is also a very pleasant hike, through Victoria's premier apple growing region, Mount Alexander and Bendigo's first water supply; the Coliban catchment area.

The fourth section from Daylesford to Bacchus Marsh crosses some of the wildest and most difficult to get to areas of the hike and is remarkably close to Melbourne, being Lerderderg Gorge. Messmate and peppermint forest abounds, and I have often seen wallabies, kangaroos, wombats and echidnas while roaming around out here.



Source: hikingfiasco.com

Apps and websites worth checking out

Some of the more useful apps or websites out there at the moment include

fungimap.org.au

This website records and maps fungi throughout Australia. The people running this website are very passionate about what they do, with online webinars, links to other groups and the funding of research into fungi.

[iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org)

Emanating from the US, this website is funded by the California Academy of Sciences and National Geographic. However, it has a well established Australian footprint, covering a wide variety of Australian flora and fauna. There is enough in here to keep you occupied on a cold winter evening when surfing the net.

[Maps.me](https://maps.me)

One of my absolute go-to apps, with downloadable maps for, I believe, the entire world which actually zone in on footpaths, fire trails, four wheel drive tracks and walking paths. Its accuracy is genuinely startling, it is incredibly comprehensive and should feature on any bushwalker's mobile phone for essential gps navigation.

[Bushwalkingvictoria.org.au](https://bushwalkingvictoria.org.au)

Victoria's peak body for bushwalking represents all bushwalkers and bushwalking clubs. The site is also a great place with a regular newsletter, and a comprehensive Walks Directory to help you find a hike that you may not have come across before. It also oversees Bush Search and Rescue, a volunteer group that is regularly called upon to search for missing hikers, and Bush Tracks and Conservation, another group that works to maintain bushwalking tracks in some of the more remote parts of the state. Got nothing to do? Check them out – you may want to get involved.

[Go Bird](https://go.bird.net)

A free app that provides an exhaustive list (with pictures) of the bird life you may encounter wherever you may happen to be. The app is driven by your location, so the birds are specific to wherever you are. And best of all, it's totally free!

[Nerdbirder](https://nerdbirder.com)

An Instagram page run by Tony Gentilcore, a gentleman who has made it his life's work to photograph every species of bird in the world. And you thought your desk job was gruelling?

[Snowys.com.au](https://snowys.com.au)

It is fair to say that hiking blogs and websites are a dime-a-dozen, but this one is actually very modern, very easy to navigate, very comprehensive and very easy to read. Highly recommended as a site to visit should you be planning a hike in one of Victoria's more remote areas. It also covers the rest of the country, and includes a variety of useful 'how to' guides.

Hiking Products Reviewed

When I started overnight hiking, it took considerable time to build up a sensible source of equipment, including a few mistakes. For example, my first tent (at \$40) was surprising robust but very large and heavy. My first sleeping mat (at \$2) was an incredibly durable (and bloody uncomfortable) yoga mat that I rolled out at the end of a tough day for a tough night. My first back pack was utterly destroyed in the endless rain of a four day sojourn along the Overland Track in Tasmania. My first batch of maps proved utterly useless when hiking but great for four wheel driving.

JetBoil

RECOMMENDED



A JetBoil device is a lightweight, convenient, gas-driven method of heating hot water in a ridiculously short time frame, hence the name. I take a JetBoil in winter to make a nice hot cup of tea, and I use one when pack carrying as a means of preparing my meals; simply boil the water and add it to the freeze-dried feast you are about to partake in.

I wouldn't recommend it for cooking as such; it tends to heat too quickly. It is designed for boiling water. However, some people have mastered the art of cooking with it. Unfortunately, if you cook, it means you need to carry something to clean it with; which is just more packing.

Prices vary, so hunt around; Anaconda sell it for around \$150. Available online and in real outdoor shops.

Radix

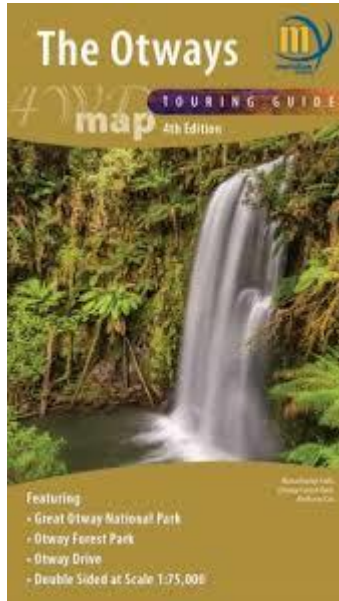
RECOMMENDED



I've become a big fan of Radix prepared meals when hiking; convenient, tasty and no gut bombs (or not for me, anyway). Available online with a variety of meals, including vegan and vegetarian options. In my view, these are the best in the market of those pre-prepared meals for your outdoor adventures.

You generally just add boiling water, so they complement the JetBoil for food preparation.

Cost is around \$14-\$17, available online and at good outdoor shops.



At some stage, you will need paper maps. They have significant advantages over online maps, in that they don't suffer flat batteries and will genuinely survive being dropped on to a rock.

I've since collected the entire set of Meridian Maps. Functional, tidy, easy to use and reasonably priced, the paper maps are a very useful accompaniment to GPS navigation.

\$2 yoga mat for sleeping

NOT RECOMMENDED



A cheap yoga mat from the Reject Shop may seem like a good idea for your first ever overnight pack carry as a cheap mattress. They do work; I did it for about six trips before common sense prevailed and I splashed out on a better sleeping 'system' (which is a rather fancy way of saying mattress).

Oh, and they no longer cost \$2; they now seem to cost ten times that amount!

Due to their size, they generally need to be packed outside of your backpack; which means they generally won't be protected from getting wet.

Not recommended, but if it's one night only and your first hike, you might get away with it!

Bush First Aid

We all need to pay attention to first aid; after all, it might well be us in need of it one day. First aid courses are a useful course for you to undertake at some stage, and YHA Bushwalking offers first aid courses to its leaders for free!

As a bushwalking participant, it is strongly recommended that you get your own first aid kit sooner or later. Bushwalking is generally a safe activity, but when things go wrong, they can be catastrophic. This club has had a number of helicopter evacuations for broken legs, rolled ankles and dislocated shoulders, and a vast array of interesting injuries and illnesses on hikes such as a leech stuck on an eyeball, tick bites and falls which have resulted in some sizeable cuts, bruises and twisted joints. We have also had instances of dehydration, mild hypothermia, excessive sunburn, general exhaustion, allergic reactions to insect bites and plants and a host of other things that are too numerous (and potentially too boring) to mention here.

A piece of advice though; commercial first aid kits are notorious for what they do *not* include, as opposed to what they do include. You may need to top up your first aid kit with variety of additional products, such as pain killing medication, insect bite treatments, band aids, antihistamines, blister treatment, aquatabs, hydraguard tablets and other stuff.

We will feature a first aid device, item or technique in our future editions for your reading (and learning) pleasure.

Blister treatments



Blisters happen, and yes, sometimes you just have to toughen up and push through. But they can be seriously debilitating and can happen to almost anyone. In extreme cases, they can even become infected, which leads to a host of other problems.

Regular hikers are encouraged to buy a blister treatment pack for their first aid kit, and not be afraid to use it for a fellow hiker if the need arises.

There are a variety of products in the market; all of which are basically effective for their designed purpose.

I use Compeed, available from chemists, bigger supermarkets and online.

And of course, seek medical attention if your blisters become particularly nasty – and consider changing your boots if blisters remain particularly problematic for you.

Snake Bite

A snake bite requires instant care and attention. Deciding to form a committee to work out what to do is not appropriate if confronted with a snake bite and, unless you have something valid to contribute, please keep your opinions to yourself about what to do.

A snake's venom travels through the body via the lymphatic system, which are a series of vessels that run parallel to blood vessels and enter the bloodstream through veins near the heart. Accordingly, sucking out the poison won't work, and neither will a tourniquet.

The proper treatment is to lay the victim down to limit the movement of the venom through the body. You then apply a compression bandage rather firmly; not so firmly that it acts as a tourniquet, but not so weakly that it doesn't work. You then immobilise the limb. For example, if the bite is on a leg, simply tie the victim's legs together; they won't be going anywhere after that.

Mark the bite area with a pen if you have one. Don't bother washing the site; the venom is already in the body.

Call 000; an air ambulance will be despatched if you are in a remote area, or push the button on your personal locator beacon if you have one – this is a life threatening situation. Send some hikers from your team to the nearest roadside or intersection to guide emergency responders directly to the victim; this will save precious time.

Do not move the victim. Just stay where you are. Moving the victim simply pushes the venom through the system, potentially providing you with far more problems than you already have.

Gaitors are strongly recommended for hikers in summer, but are not foolproof. And most importantly; don't tease a snake.



Club Policies

Rules, rules, rules . . . you can't get away from them. Don't get me started . . .

As with all clubs, we do have a variety of policies, rules and 'ways of doing things', which are generally in place to make sure this club has a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. Naturally, most people have no trouble complying with these rules, but then again, not everybody is 'most people'.

A quick snapshot of some of our policies will be covered in this section in future.

Photography guidelines

Most people do enjoy taking pictures on a hike, and it is only natural that people may wish to take pictures of their friends, both old and new. However, please respect that some people may not necessarily like having their photo taken and may prefer not to participate – which is entirely their choice. Additionally, others may not want their photograph to be posted to social media of any description for a variety of reasons that are probably none of your business. Please respect these choices; if someone does not want their photograph taken, then simply move on.

Car etiquette

Some leaders will try and organise a lift for you upon request; nothing guaranteed, of course. If you require a lift, then please be nice to all involved. The person offering to drive you is not your personal uber driver; they are not necessarily prepared to pick you up from your house, but may prefer to meet at a mutually convenient location somewhere along the way. Please chip in generously for your share of pricey petrol, and please do not argue with the driver over the choice of radio station. Also, the driver is not your captive audience; they may not necessarily wish to hear your entire life story. Please respect these points.

You may think I'm being flippant, but I'm actually not; many people prefer not to drive others exactly for the reasons just mentioned!

The club also has a policy on fuel cost: drivers may work out their reimbursement cost at 40 cents per kilometre, divided by the number of people in the car. A 200 kilometre round trip will therefore result in a reimbursement cost of \$80. If there are two people in the car (ie, driver and passenger), then the passenger would be expected to contribute \$40, and this decreases as the number of people in the car increases. Drivers may charge less, but it should not be more.

Ambulance insurance

All participants are strongly encouraged to have ambulance cover. It may be part of your private health cover but check your small print carefully. Many private health funds have significant limitations, caps or even exclusions to ambulance cover. Ambulances are not free, they are not covered by Medicare, and our leaders will not carry you out to save you the cost of an ambulance should you hurt yourself.

Ambulance cover is around \$50 a year for singles and is Australia wide.

If you don't have ambulance cover, head over to ambulance.vic.gov.au/membership today. Cancel your social plans for the next week if you must in order to afford this.

Make sure you renew your subscription each year. It's well worth it.

Special Feature: Hiking the Dapba

Leona Xu is a regular hiker with YHA Bushwalking, with a preference for the tougher hikes. Prior to the pandemic, she undertook a trip to Tibet's Dapba, and wrote this article upon her return. It is published here for the first time.

Prior to the pandemic, I was packing my bags and getting ready for a 10 day road trip to Lhasa, Tibet. During the 10 days, there was a hiking detour to Dapba (called Dao Cheng County in Mandarin Chinese). As we were staying in the mountains (above 3800metres) for 2 days, I planned to do a 2 day hike tackling sections of the famous multi-day hike called Rock Line, named after the American hiker Joseph Rock in 1926.



Chonggu temple, taken at the beginning of day 1

The first day was a 6km return hike with a 280 metre elevation, from 3,800 metres to 4,080 metres. Weather was typical alpine weather. While it was in the middle of summer for the Northern Hemisphere, it was 2 degrees celsius and raining in Dapba.

The beginning of the hike was nice and gentle starting with a visit to the historical Tibetan temple, Chonggu. The temple is a Tibetan pilgrimage comprising three mountains sanctified by the 5th Dalai Lama. As I walked into the temple, I could hear the sound of harmonised chanting from the monks who still live there. I love seeing temples amongst the mountains. The unbelievable effort that ancient Tibetans took to build such amazing structures with limited conditions in high altitudes never ceases to amaze me.

The footpath got a lot steeper beyond the temple. Every step made me more puffed despite walking on a well maintained metal footpath. As an asthmatic tackling hiking above an elevation of 3500 metres for the first time, I had to remind myself that I needed to focus on my pacing and breathing as it would be very hard to recover if anything happened. After about a 1.5 hour walk, I arrived at the alpine lake Sgrol Ima Iha Cu (Pearl sea in Mandarin Chinese). The lake was beautiful and crystal clear. It mirrored one of the three mountains named Chenrezig (6032 meters in height).



Lake Sgrol Ima Iha Cu and bottom of Chenrezig

The second day was a lot longer. It was a 17 km walk which passed the same temple but headed in a different direction. The walk was much more challenging than the walk on the first day. The river flooded overnight and it damaged parts of the metal bridge. At times, I had to jump over parts of the bridge in order to press on.

After 7 km of walking along the river, I reached LuoRong cattle ranch. It is not much of a ranch anymore but is the beginning of a big climb; a 5.3 km hike with a 520 metre elevation. The path was very narrow and popular. I was sharing the path with people and horses which carried people up the mountain.

Zigzagging up a narrow path was definitely something I was not expecting. It definitely consumed more energy and I started to have doubts that I could make it to the alpine lakes (Mike sea and Five Colours Sea) as it was physically challenging for me. In case I was out of breath, I had bought a tin of oxygen with me. I felt very lucky that I was feeling alright all the way. I saw many people feeling the effects of the altitude and physical challenge resting on the path and inhaling oxygen from tins.



One of the three mountains, Manjusri. All the three mountains are named after tibetan buldas

The sky was clear for a little while on my way to the Five Colour Sea. I was able to see most of the three mountains except their peaks. I was very happy to be able to see the main part of the mountains as I could only see the bottom on the first day.



Five Colour Sea at 4600 metres

I reached the Five Colour Sea just after lunch time, which was perfect timing for lunch. I mean, who doesn't want to have lunch with a view like this?

After a 30 minute lunch break, I was ready to tackle the last climb to the final destination, the Milk Sea which sits at 4700 metres! Although it was only a 600 metre walk with 100 metre elevation from the Five Colour Sea, the walk did not get any easier! The sore legs and reduced oxygen constantly reminded me of the high altitude. That was probably the longest 600 metres I have ever walked. I kept checking my phone and seeing how long it had been during the walk. The way down was much easier, the faster I descended, the more I could feel the change in altitude compared with the climb. It only took me about 2 hours to return to LuoRong cattle ranch. I didn't expect that being able to inhale more oxygen would make me so happy. After a long day trekking, I decided to take the shuttle back to my accommodation, which saved me worrying about the damaged metal bridge that I walked across in the morning.

Notes:

I decided to share these 2 hikes with everyone as this was the first time I hiked over 3000 metres which made it very memorable for me. Also because of restrictions for Australians to visit Tibetan regions in China, Dapba (DaoCheng county) has fallen off the radar. Dapa is definitely a good place for hiking if you are not interested in EBC or other world famous hikes in the Himalayas. It is a perfect little adventure if you want to have a mixture of an outdoor adventure and sightseeing holiday.